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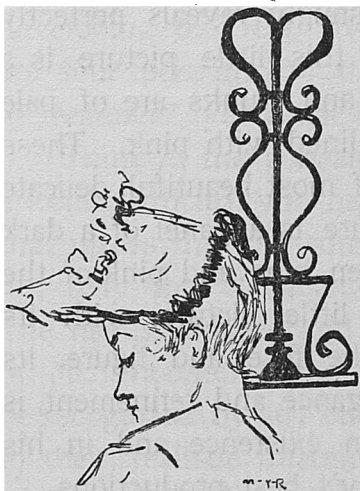
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MARIANO FORTUNY AND LÉON BONNAT—NOTES ON THEIR PICTURES IN THE WALTERS COLLECTION, BALTIMORE



INTELLECTUALLY strong, brilliant and audacious, Mariano Fortuny was the apostle of brilliant, dazzling sunlight.

Meteor-like, he appeared on the horizon of the art world with a new thought, a something that gave the art of painting a step in advance. He forever settled the possibilities of painting real, vibrating light.

His gifts were varied and in his painting he is two distinct characters. In one his skill in finish equals Meissonier's,

to which he adds a more brilliant genius. In the other, the strange, weird occultism of the Orient is brought before you with a power never surpassed. What Fortuny might have accomplished can only be surmised from the wonderful success of his earth life. At the age of thirty-three he laid aside his brush. This collection is very strong in his works, two of which I will describe because they are not generally known through reproductions.

"The Rare Vase," is a little canvas of marvellous beauty.

On a tall stand of elaborate design rests a large vase of beautiful proportions, on the surface of which decorative designs are portrayed in rich colors, a revel of red, blue, green and gold.

Standing in the center of the room is a *connoisseur* whose every action expresses admiration for the beauty and expression of the vase. He stands with his feet firmly planted on the floor, his head thrown back, and his eyes fairly dancing with delight. His right hand rests on his hip while in his left he holds a slender walking-stick, the end of which he unconsciously puts to his mouth. In this little figure there is some of the best drawing ever done. Look at the way in which the knees

Zamacois, on leaving Fortuny's studio, where he had tried to paint, remarked on reaching the garden: "I can now breathe freely, but I can not do so where Mariano paints! He absorbs all the light, color and air; in fact, he is enough to disgust one with one's own work, for he is the only one who can paint"

*"He is master of us all. * * * Oh, Fortuny! I can't sleep for you!"*
Henri Regnault

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are hinged and the manner in which the hips and body rest on the legs; in fact the solidity, firmness and action of the entire figure. The costume fitting the man snugly reveals perfectly the form in all its beauty. In color, this little picture is a harmony of beautiful tones. His vest and trunks are of pale blue satin, his coat of a rich green stuff lined with pink. These colors are relieved against a background of most beautiful, delicate color and design. Just back of the figure is a panel of a dark green, bluish tone against which the green, blue and pink of the costume come most beautifully. This little picture, with its wonderful character, as expressed in the face and figure, its drawing and painting of textures, its elegance and refinement, is one of the first things of the kind in existence and in his more elaborate style, it is one of Fortuny's best productions.

The remarkable little picture, No. 79, by the same painter, again displays the character of the artist whose genius knew no bounds or limitations.

This painting, "An Ecclesiastic," is a canvas scarcely six inches square, but on it is painted a great big character. Here you have a type of face of one in high authority, but happy withal; a face that could wreath in smiles with your joy, or could shed tears of sympathy with a sorrow. He is well stocked with good humor and in the main enjoys life. The painting of the face—scarcely half an inch high—is wonderful in its drawing, modeling and firmness. His form, which is large, is enveloped in a scarlet robe; this is placed against a background of pure vermilion, a performance in color that only Fortuny would dare attempt. This canvas is so strongly painted that it easily holds its own with the large and powerful canvases which by it is surrounded.

From a letter written by Thomas Couture upon hearing of Fortuny's death: "Oh, the beautiful things! I dream of them all night! They are the life, the light, the budding of Spring, the colors with which God has painted his flowers. It is not painting, it is not work, it is not human! Butterflies have brushed his canvas with their wings, leaving their gorgeousness thereon, and the fairies have pressed their most beautiful flowers to color it. All sparkles with sunshine and genius! All is transformed by a magic prism. The vulgar becomes poetic—the satire, amiable."



Bonnat's portraits

In the department of portraiture the collection of Mr. Walters is extremely rich. The strongest, perhaps, and the ones that strike the visitor most forcibly, are the portraits by Léon Bonnat,

because of the distinct personality of his art. Bonnat is a realist—but not in the common interpretation of the term. Photography has no place in Bonnat's art, nor has elaboration of detail with vulgar imitation as its end. His careful work is *his* means of developing the real, living character upon the canvas. There are four portraits by this artist in the collection, all differing in treatment, yet equal in strength and merit.

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Thus, in the portrait, "Mr. Wm. T. Walters," (mentioned in a former article), you have the highest type of realism, a realism that places the individual man squarely before you; delineating, not only the character, but every characteristic of the man. The hands, clasped and hanging in front of him, are the hands of Mr. Walters. Should they be framed separately they would be recognized by any one knowing the man. And yet the hands, in their realistic treatment, in no way interfere with the effect of the head. The mild blue eyes, yet firm as a rock; keen and penetrating, yet full of the tenderest sympathy—you are in the presence of a man who can read your soul, a personality that is distinct in its originality, broad, generous and yet just, whose charity grants every one the right to his opinions. All these can be read on this canvas, painted in an honest, straightforward manner.

Beside this great portrait of Mr. Walters I would place that of the immortal Barye, on account of the tender relationship that existed between the two men, bound together by the golden ties of friendship. What a portrait is this of Barye! With what sympathy has the artist delineated the friend; you feel that you are in the presence of a man whose depths were never sounded, of one whose great powers were never exhausted. You feel the mentality of the man at once, a slumbering, emotional, generous mentality like Angelo's or Beethoven's; the tireless perseverance of a Napoleon combined with a tenderness that led him to take up, and give the world a better appreciation of, the animal kingdom; a man who was conscious of a mission and lived in an

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atmosphere peculiarly his own. When you look at this portrait of Barye, you become conscious of something that separates him from you. Barye was alone.

The color in which the picture is "tuned" is suggestive of the beautiful medium in which his wonderful works are cast. He is leaning on a modeling stand, an implement of work in his hand, with his broad, massive head tipped slightly forward. The mental faculties thus push themselves upon you, the clear cut, warm, brown eyes look from under strong, expressive brows. He has a mouth that expresses sensitiveness and exquisite taste, but determination is also marked in every line; firmly modeled cheeks and a square, massive jaw and chin stamp the man as one of such force and vigor as is rarely met. His form is large and strong, one capable of great endurance. Léon Bonnat has in this portrait "writ life of Barye" which is in perfect harmony with the work of his immortal hand which surrounds it.

Let us now look at Bonnat as painted by himself. Here is the head of a man in the prime of life, whose face shows refinement and beauty of character, a sensitive, nervous man who has a keen perception for the essential, in everything. The features are strong, yet delicately chiseled; the brows are finely developed, revealing a habit of deep observation. The eyes, large, clear cut, and of a rich, dark brown, regard you with a penetrating look that is wonderful. They haunt you. The mouth, firm and sensitive, is partly concealed by a heavy brown mustache and the face is covered with a closely clipped beard that shapes to a point on the chin. The entire head is finely developed and distinguished in character. On his head he wears a seal skin cap. This head, although painted in a broad, artistic manner, is yet realistic in its absolute truth of tone. Painted and presented to Mr. Walters as a token of friendship and esteem, M. Bonnat has at the same time given to the world a picture that will live.

R. B. GRUELLE

L. Bonnat à son ami
M. Walters.

1885.



L. Bonnat